

STRESZCZENIE W JĘZYKU ANGIELSKIM

In this doctoral dissertation, the relationships between body modifications (tattoos and piercings), body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), alexithymia, and the acceptance of dermatological diseases were examined. The dissertation consists of three distinct, original scientific publications. The aim of the study was to clinically characterize individuals with tattoos and piercings, to investigate the level of alexithymia in individuals with tattoos, to determine the prevalence of body dysmorphic disorder symptoms, to assess self-esteem and body image perception in individuals with piercings, and to analyze the occurrence of body modifications among patients with chronic dermatoses in the context of illness acceptance.

The first article aimed to characterize tattoos and to determine the prevalence of alexithymia among individuals with this form of body modification. The study included 200 adults with tattoos and 203 individuals in a control group. Most respondents reported having a single tattoo, most commonly located on the forearms or hands, featuring plant-related motifs, and performed as a means of expressing their personality. The Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) was used to assess alexithymia, revealing that alexithymia occurred significantly more frequently among individuals with tattoos (23.5%) compared to the control group (16.2%). Additionally, participants with tattoos were divided into two subgroups: those with verbal tattoos (e.g., inscriptions, names, or dates) and those with non-verbal tattoos depicting symbols or graphic motifs (such as plant or animal designs). It was observed that individuals with non-verbal tattoos achieved higher scores on the externally oriented thinking (EOT) subscale of the TAS-20 compared to those with text-based tattoos.

The second article was dedicated to individuals with piercings and the analysis of psychological aspects within this group, with a particular focus on BDD symptoms, appearance-related anxiety, body image, and self-esteem. The study had a cross-sectional design and was conducted online among 206 adults with piercings. The results of this study showed that a significant portion of individuals with piercings exhibited symptoms characteristic of BDD. Based on the AAI scale, 25.7% of participants achieved a score suggesting a high risk of dysmorphia, and according to the BDDQ-DV questionnaire, the percentage of individuals potentially affected by BDD was 29.1%. Respondents in the high-risk BDD group were characterized by significantly lower self-esteem and lower acceptance of their body's functionality compared to those without BDD symptoms. The presence of dysmorphic

symptoms was significantly correlated with a higher incidence of other mental disorders and a history of psychiatric treatment.

The third article involved a study with dermatology patients and focused on the relationship between body modifications and the acceptance of skin disease as well as BDD symptoms. This was a clinical study conducted among 333 patients with chronic dermatological conditions. Among the dermatology patients surveyed, 29.4% had at least one body modification – most commonly tattoos (20.7%) or piercings (15.9%). BDD symptoms were observed in 15.9% of patients (based on the AAI scale). It turned out that the prevalence of BDD was higher in the subgroup of patients with tattoos (26.1%) and piercings (34%) compared to those without such modifications. Patients with body modifications achieved significantly higher scores on the AAI scale compared to those without tattoos or piercings. Dermatology patients who poorly accepted their disease exhibited BDD symptoms much more frequently (45.5%), while in the group with moderate disease acceptance, this applied to 19.2% of patients, and with high acceptance, only 4.6% of patients.

In summary, the conducted studies revealed significant associations between body modifications and psychological issues, such as body dysmorphic disorder and alexithymia. The prevalence of BDD symptoms was found to be much higher in individuals with piercings, compared to the general population. The results of the entire dissertation indicate that individuals with tattoos and piercings may constitute a group at increased risk for body image issues, requiring heightened attention from dermatologists and mental health specialists. A practical conclusion from this work is the proposal that the care of individuals with body modifications – especially dermatology patients – should include an assessment of potential psychological difficulties (e.g., dysmorphia or emotional regulation problems) to provide appropriate support when necessary.